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ABSTRACT

This policy update presents key aspects of the statutory language of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-239), which provides states and localities with federal funds to be used as venture capital to underwrite the initial costs of planning and establishing statewide School-to-Work Opportunities systems. The paper focuses on: (1) purpose of the Act; (2) program components, including general program requirements such as equal access and participation of youth with disabilities, followed by descriptions of the school-based learning component, the work-based learning component, and the connecting activities component; (3) school-to-work opportunities development and implementation grants to states; (4) grants to local partnerships; and (5) strategies for ensuring participation of youth with disabilities. Potential implications for youth with disabilities are described. The paper also analyzes the relationship between the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 and the transition service requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990. (JDD)

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National Transition Network

Policy Update

Summer 1994

ED 380 946

Youth with Disabilities and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994

On May 4, 1994, President Clinton signed into law the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239). The Act is a joint initiative between the Departments of Education and Labor. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is part of a broader national initiative for comprehensive education reform, which also includes Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the National Skill Standards Act of 1994. The Act will provide states and localities with federal funds that are to be used as venture capital to underwrite the initial costs of planning and establishing statewide School-to-Work Opportunities systems. The purpose of this Policy Update is to present key aspects of the statutory language and describe its potential implications for youth with disabilities as served under the Part B provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990.

■ Purpose of the Act

The purpose of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 is to establish a national framework within which all states can create statewide School-to-Work Opportunities systems. The Act calls for major restructuring and significant systemic changes that facilitate the creation of a universal, high-quality, school-to-work transition system that enables *all* students in the United States to successfully enter the workplace. As stated in Section 3(a), a major purpose of this Act is to:

(1)(C) offer opportunities for all students to participate in a performance-based education and training program that will —

(i) enable the students to earn portable credentials;
(ii) prepare the students for first jobs in high-skill, high-wage careers; and
(iii) increase their opportunities for further education, including education in a four-year college or university.

The Act also makes several specific references to students with disabilities. As further referenced in Section 3, additional purposes of the Act are:

(11) to motivate all youths, including low-achieving youths, school dropouts, and youths with disabilities, to stay in or return to school or a classroom setting and strive to succeed, by providing enriched learning experiences and assistance in obtaining good jobs and continuing their education in postsecondary educational institutions; and

(13) to increase opportunities for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, by enabling individuals to prepare for careers that are not traditional for their race, gender, or disability.

These statements emphasize the Act's specific purposes in addressing the high national dropout rate among students, including students with disabilities. The Act also stresses the importance of ensuring students with disabilities employment opportunities in nontraditional careers. It is Congress's intent, as outlined in Section 3 of the Act, that states and localities design and implement School-to-Work Opportunities systems that fully include and address the needs of students with disabilities.

The National Transition Network is a collaboration of the University of Arkansas; Colorado State University; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Minnesota; PACER Center; Technical Assistance for Parent Programs; and the University of Vermont. Its headquarters are at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota, Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, (612) 626-8200.

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School-to-Work Opportunities Basic Program Components (Title I)

The Act seeks to improve the knowledge and skills of all American youths by integrating academic and occupational learning, integrating school-based and work-based learning and building effective linkages between secondary and postsecondary education. In addition to a set of general program requirements, the Act calls for the planning, development, and integration of a school-based learning component (Section 102), a work-based learning component (Section 103), and a connecting activities component (Section 104). (See page 5; Figure 1: *Interrelationship of Transition Service Requirements of IDEA and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994*). The following discussion highlights several aspects of Sections 101 to 104 and discusses their implications for youth with disabilities.

General Program Requirements (Section 101)

The general program requirements of the Act clarify Congress's intent that *all* students participate in programs established under the Act. Several specific provisions and assurances guide the participation of students with disabilities in all programs and services addressed within the Act.

Equal Access Assurances:

With regard to equal access for all students, the law is established to:

> *(5) Provide all students with equal access to the full range of such program components (including both school-based and work-based learning components), and related activities, such as recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities, except that nothing in this Act shall be construed to provide any individual with an entitlement to services under this Act.*

It is not the intent of Congress that Paragraph (5), Section 101 establish an "entitlement" to any student for services or activities under the Act, but to underline the intent and purposes of the Act that all students, regardless of their race, color, national origin, gender, disability, or other characteristics, have the same opportunity to participate in all aspects of School-to-Work Opportunities programs and are not subject to discrimination as student participants in such programs. In fact, numerous references are made throughout the legislation to providing "all students" with the opportunity to participate in School-to-Work Opportunities programs to stress that programs should be designed to serve all students, including those who plan on continuing their education at a college or university. Section 4 of the Act defines *all students* as meaning:

> *(2) Both male and female students from a broad range of backgrounds and circumstances, including disadvantaged students, students with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, American Indians, Alaskan natives, native Hawaiians, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, migrant children, school dropouts, and academically talented students.*

Congress envisioned that state and local partnerships would design and implement programs that provide appropriate learning opportunities for individuals with diverse backgrounds. The Act specifies certain statutory and regulatory requirements of other federal laws, including civil rights regulations, that may not be neglected in involving students in school-to-work programs. This includes specific reference to students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and others.

Student Participation:

The participation of youth with disabilities in various programs of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 must be guided by the already-established transition service requirements of Part B of the IDEA. This means that when determining the participation of youth with disabilities, such decisions must: " (1) be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and (2) include (i) instruction, (ii) community experiences, (iii) the development of postschool and other adult living objectives, and (iv) if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation." These types of programs and services are currently included within the Act's broad definition of its school-based and work-based learning components, and connecting activities.

Safeguards:

The Act makes assurances that all school-based and work-based learning programs must be operated in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. In an effort to stimulate state and local implementation of school-to-work programming for youth with disabilities, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, recently developed working agreements with the Social Security Administration to ensure greater use of employment incentives, and with the U.S. Department of Labor to provide guidance to educational agencies to ensure

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that programs are operated in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. These working agreements also serve to expand opportunities for youth with disabilities to participate in employment settings for the purposes of assessment, career exploration, job shadowing, and skills training. As state and local School-to-Work Opportunities programs are designed, the stipulations of these working agreements should be followed.

School-Based Learning Component (Section 102)

The school-based learning component of the Act includes a variety of programs and services designed to help all students attain high academic and occupational standards. This includes programs designed to expose students to a broad array of career opportunities, and facilitate the selection of career majors, based on individual interests, goals, strengths, and abilities. Specifically called for in the Act is the improvement of student knowledge and skills by integrating academic and occupational learning, and building effective linkages between secondary and postsecondary programs. When involving students with disabilities in school-based learning programs, several special considerations may need to be taken into account. Several examples are given here.

Career Awareness, Exploration, and Counseling:

Section 102 makes provisions for—

> *(1) career awareness and career exploration and counseling (beginning at the earliest possible age, but not later than the seventh grade) in order to help students who may be interested to identify and select or reconsider, their interests, goals, and career majors, including those options that may not be traditional for their gender, race, or ethnicity.*

Career awareness, exploration, and counseling are essential school-based learning services for *all* students. Students with disabilities, however, may require special assistance in making informed decisions regarding future careers. In this regard, it is important that counselors and other school staff assisting the student and the student's family be familiar with the full range of assistive technology devices, environmental accommodations, job accommodations, and other types of supports needed by individuals with disabilities to fully participate in school- and community-based learning situations. This concern is addressed in the Act's definition of career guidance and counseling. As defined in Section 4, the term *career guidance and counseling* refers to programs that—

> *(B) assist individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices; and*
> *(C) aid students to develop career options with attention to surmounting gender, race, ethnic, disability, language, or socioeconomic impediments to career options and encouraging careers in nontraditional employment.*

The point here is that students with disabilities may not, without assistance and support, fully benefit from traditional career awareness, exploration, and counseling programs. Another important aspect of this school-to-work provision is its attention to introducing career development planning early in the student's educational career (*not later than the seventh grade*).

Career Majors:

Section 102 states that —

> *(2) Initial selection by interested students of a career major not later than the beginning of the eleventh grade; ...*

Emphasis here must be placed on the statement "initial selection ... not later than the beginning of the eleventh grade." This is certainly not intended to restrict planning and the initial selection of a career major until the eleventh grade (or age equivalent) for any student. For students with disabilities, that planning and selection must begin earlier, and at the latest by the age of 16 years.

Section 4 of the Act specifically defines the term *career major* as —

> *(5) a coherent sequence of courses or field of study that prepares a student for a first job and that —*
> *(C) typically includes at least 2 years of secondary education and at least 1 or 2 years of postsecondary education;*
> *(E) results in the award of—*
> *(i) a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as —*
> *(I) a general equivalency diploma; or*
> *(II) an alternative diploma or certificate for students with disabilities for whom such alternative diploma or certificate is appropriate;*
> *(ii) a certificate or diploma recognizing successful completion of 1 or 2 years of postsecondary education (if appropriate); and*
> *(iii) a skills certificate; . . .*

Important in this definition of *career major* is the flexibility and multiple options afforded to signify the successful completion of high school ("a high school diploma or its equivalent"). The purpose is to ensure that successful completion is available to all students, including students with disabilities, who sometimes are denied this opportunity. The opportunity has been denied in the past when a student has been unable to pass a minimal competency test (required by several states for receipt of a high school diploma) for which accommodations and assessment procedures were not allowed, or when a student received

instruction in some content areas within an alternative special education program. The definition of career major further emphasizes and stresses the importance of postsecondary education in helping students to successfully complete their career majors. This emphasis on postsecondary education participation among students with disabilities is particularly important in view of recent findings that document low rates of participation in such programs among these students.

"Regularly Scheduled" Evaluations:

The Act also emphasizes the importance of regularly scheduled evaluations for identifying needed learning opportunities for students. Section 102 of the Act provides for —

> *(5) regularly scheduled evaluations involving ongoing consultation and problem-solving with students and school dropouts to identify their academic strengths and weaknesses, academic progress, workplace knowledge, goals, and the need for additional learning opportunities to master core academic and vocational skills; ...*

For youth with disabilities it is important that regular and continuous assessments be used to determine needed accommodations to learning environments, curricula and materials, and instructional procedures. Opportunities to participate in programs have, in the past, been denied when accommodations have not been adequately made for a student. Regularly scheduled assessments may include functional assessments/evaluations and other informal inventories. Part B of IDEA identifies specific procedures and assurances that should provide adequate guidance to state and local administrative authorities regarding this matter.

Transition Planning:

A further provision of the school-based learning component of the Act includes —

> *(6) Procedures to facilitate the entry of students participating in a School-to-Work Opportunities program into additional training or postsecondary education programs as well as to facilitate the transfer of students between education and training programs.*

IDEA specifies that the individualized educational program (IEP) for each student, beginning no later than age 16 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate) must include a statement of transition services to be provided and a statement of the school's and other participating agencies' responsibilities when providing these services before the student leaves the school setting. The determination of appropriate training or postsecondary education programs is part of a broader array of community services that are to be addressed when planning for the postschool service needs of students with disabilities under Part B of IDEA. The "procedures to facilitate the entry of students" with disabilities in varied training and postsecondary education programs are the procedures now addressed within IDEA.

Work-Based Learning Component (Section 103)

The work-based learning component of the Act stresses the importance of workplaces as active learning environments in the educational process. The Act calls for making employers joint partners with educators in providing opportunities for all students to participate in high quality, work-based learning experiences. The work-based learning component may include such activities as work experience (including paid work experience), job training (including on-the-job training), job shadowing, workplace mentoring, and others. One of the major purposes is to build on and advance a range of promising school-to-work activities, such as tech-prep education, career academies, school-to-apprenticeship programs, youth apprenticeships, school-sponsored enterprises, business-education compacts, and promising strategies that assist school dropouts. Several specific strategies will need to be considered to ensure the full participation of youth with disabilities in these and other programs and activities of the Act. Several are identified and described here.

Work Experience:

Making available comprehensive work experience programs is one of the mandatory activities of the Act. While not specifically defined by the Act, work experience is a broad concept that should be meant to include paid work experiences, including supported employment (as defined in Title I, Part VI-C, of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986) for youth with disabilities.

Workplace Mentoring:

As defined in Section 4 of the Act, the term *workplace mentor* means—

> *(25) ... an employee or other individual, approved by the employer at a workplace, who possesses the skills and knowledge to be mastered by a student, and who instructs the student, critiques the performance of the student, challenges the student to perform well, and works in consultation with classroom teachers and the employer of the student.*

The reference to "or other individual, approved by the employer," recognizes the importance of involving a wide range of other individuals who can assist youth with disabilities in successfully participating in work-based learning programs. Such individuals may include coworkers as

Figure 1: Interrelationship of Transition Service Requirements of IDEA and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994

School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994

School-Based Learning Component

- Career awareness and exploration and counseling to identify career interests and goals.
- Selection of a career major by the 11th grade.
- Program of study designed to meet the standards set by Goals 2,000: Educate America Act.
- Integration of academic and vocational learning.
- Regularly scheduled student evaluations.
- Entry into additional postsecondary education.

Work-Based Learning Component

- Work experiences.
- Job training experiences relevant to student career.
- Workplace mentoring.
- Instruction in general workplace competencies.
- Instruction in all aspects of the industry.

Connecting Activities Component

- Match students and employers.
- School site mentor to serve as liaison among employers, schools, and educators.
- Provide technical assistance and services to employers, educators, case managers, and others.
- Provide assistance to schools and employers to integrate school-based and work-based learning.
- Encourage active participation of employers.
- Collect and analyze information regarding post-program outcomes of students.
- Post-program planning and assistance.
- Link youth development activities with employer strategies for upgrading worker skills.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA)

- Include (1) instruction; (2) community experiences; (3) development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives; and (4) if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.
- Annual planning and review meetings: functional vocational assessment; assessment of student's needs & interests.
- The IEP for each student , beginning no later than age 16 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate).

- "Transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adults services, independent living , or community participation.

- Development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives based on students' interests.
- Provision of related services to achieve transition goals.
- The IEP must include a statement of transition services including, if appropriate, a statement of each public agency's and each participating agency's responsibilities or linkages, or both, before the student leaves the school setting.
- Student participation is required in the development of transition plans.
- Graduation assistance is provided.
- Post-program reconvening of the IEP team.

trainers and mentors and school- or community agency-sponsored job coaches, work-study coordinators, special educators, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and others who provide specialized training and support to students with disabilities at worksites. This type of support has been readily acknowledged by employers as an effective means of ensuring that students with disabilities learn and acquire appropriate job skills.

Instruction in General Workplace Competencies:

To ensure meaningful student participation in varied work-based learning activities, the Act promotes —

(4) instruction in general workplace competencies, including instruction and activities related to developing positive work attitudes, and employability and participative skills; ...

This specific work-based learning activity stresses the importance of students developing "work attitudes" and "participative skills" in addition to job-specific skill competencies. For youth with disabilities, this may also include the development of independent living, social, and other skills related to successful community and workplace participation. Research has shown, for example, that individuals with disabilities often experience employment difficulties, due to a lack of personal and interpersonal skills that enable them to successfully interact with coworkers and respond to everyday job demands and expectations.

It is also important that limitations presented by students in the development of "general workplace competencies," shall not be used as a means of excluding such students from participation in the work-based learning component or other components of the Act. Instead, accommodations, based on the procedural intent and requirements of Part B of IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 should be fully considered for individual students.

All Aspects of the Industry:

The work-based learning component includes—

(5) broad instruction, to the extent practicable, in all aspects of an industry.

The term *all aspects of an industry* means—

Section 4(1) ... All aspects of the industry or industry sector a student is preparing to enter, including planning, management, finances, technical and production skills, underlying principles of technology, labor and community issues, health and safety issues, and environmental issues related to such industry or industry sector.

By design, workplaces are intended to become environments within which academic and occupational learning are fully integrated. By definition, workplaces should not only be used for the purposes of job skill development, but should become environments where students learn positive work habits, interpersonal and effective communications skills, general knowledge of business operations, demands and expectations of employers, and applied academic skills. This type of flexibility affords all students, including students with disabilities, multiple options and opportunities for learning in applied community-based settings.

Connecting Activities Component (Section 104)

The connecting activities component of the Act encourages the broad participation of community representatives, including employers, parents, students, community-based organizations, secondary and postsecondary schools, and other public and private entities. One of the major activities proposed under this provision of the Act is to ensure that appropriate linkages are established as students make the transition from high school to postsecondary education, on-the-job training, employment, and other facets of community involvement and participation. This also includes attention to evaluating the post-program outcomes of participants in School-to-Work Opportunities programs. These activities are clearly consistent with the transition service requirements of Part B of IDEA for effective improved transition planning and service coordination. The following illustrates the interrelationship of Part B of IDEA and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

Matching Students with the Work-Based Learning Opportunities of Employers:

The transition service requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) currently require that the IEP include "a statement of needed transition services for students, beginning no later than age 16 and annually thereafter (and, when determined appropriate for the individual, beginning at age 14 or younger) including, when appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or linkages (or both) before the student leaves the school setting."

IDEA also requires that students with disabilities as well as their parents participate in IEP planning meetings when transition goals and objectives are discussed. Determinations of transition goals and objectives to be included in the student's IEP must be based on adequate and appropriate assessment information that matches the student's preferences, interests and needs to specific learning experiences. When involving students in work-based learning programs, such determinations must be made on the basis of adequate and appropriate assessment information and input

from students with disabilities and their parents, as well as in consultation with other agencies identified as relevant in supporting students' participation in school-to-work programs and services.

School Site Mentor:

Section 4 of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act defines a *school site mentor* as:

> *(18)... a professional employed at a school who is dedicated as the advocate for a particular student, and who works in consultation with classroom teachers, counselors, related services personnel, and the employer of the student to design and monitor the progress of the School-to-Work Opportunities program of the student.*

School site mentors for students with disabilities may include teachers, rehabilitation personnel, parent advocates, parents, professional advocates, volunteer advocates, job coaches, paraprofessionals, and others familiar with the student and his or her needs for school-based and work-based learning. The role of school site mentors as defined in Section 4 is also consistent with current efforts in special education to facilitate "inclusion" of students with disabilities in general education programs by providing consultation and support to classroom teachers and other school personnel.

Post-Program Service Coordination:

Connecting activities include "providing assistance to participants who have completed the program in finding an appropriate job, continuing their education, or entering into an additional training program." This also includes "linking the participants with other community services that may be necessary to assure a successful transition from school to work." This language is consistent with the regulatory language of IDEA, Section 300.347(a)(b)(c), which includes the following statutory provision:

> *(a) If a participating agency fails to provide agreed-upon transition services contained in the IEP of a student with a disability, the public agency responsible for the student's education shall, as soon as possible, initiate a meeting for the purpose of identifying alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives and, if necessary, revising the student's IEP.*
>
> *(b) Nothing in this part relieves any participating agency, including the state vocational rehabilitation agency, of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria of that agency.*

The intent of this section is to ensure that the public agency responsible for the student's education will take necessary steps to see that each student with a disability receives needed transition services. The provisions of Section 300.347 of IDEA give parents and students a means to reengage with the planning team if transition plans as specified on the student's IEP prior to graduation fall through. Implicit in this is the understanding that students will be connected or reconnected to needed community services and supports even after they have completed their school program.

Evaluations of Post-Program Outcomes:

The Act describes a means for "collecting and analyzing information regarding post-program outcomes of participants in the School-to-Work Opportunities program, to the extent practicable, on the basis of socioeconomic status, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and disability, and on the basis of whether the participants are students with limited English proficiency, school dropouts, disadvantaged students, or academically talented students." To date, numerous postschool follow-up studies of former special education students have been commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. These earlier studies have identified an array of meaningful outcomes as well as study procedures for collecting and analyzing this information on former special education students.

Of importance in the design of future state and local post-program evaluation systems is the inclusion of an "essential range" of outcomes that help to further our understanding of the postschool status and community adjustment of youth with disabilities. Such outcomes include community living status, social and interpersonal development, recreation and leisure pursuits, community integration, in addition to employment and postsecondary education participation rates.

■ School-to-Work Opportunities Development and Implementation Grants to States (Title II)

The purpose of this subtitle is to assist states in planning and implementing comprehensive statewide School-to-Work Opportunities systems. This process has now begun with the issuance of state development and implementation grants. As states apply for these development and implementation grants, broad-based input and participation by state and local groups and organizations is required. For example, recipients of state development grants must provide—

> *Section 203(b)(3) a description of the manner in which the state has obtained and will continue to obtain the active and continued participation in the planning and development of the statewide School-to-Work Opportunities system, of employers and other interested parties, such as locally elected officials, secondary schools and postsecondary educational institutions (or related*

agencies), business associations, industrial extension centers, employees, labor organizations or associations of such organizations, teachers, related services personnel, students, parents, community-based organizations, rehabilitation agencies and organizations, Indian tribes, registered apprenticeship agencies, vocational educational agencies, vocational student organizations, and human service agencies.

Section 213(d)(5) similarly obligates states seeking implementation grants to "describe the manner in which the state ... will continue to obtain the active and continued involvement" of certain agencies and groups. This includes vocational rehabilitation agencies, human service organizations, educators, students, parents, related services personnel, and others who serve the interests and needs of individuals with disabilities. The type, level, and nature of this continuous input and involvement by state and local representatives is not formally defined by the Act. This will necessitate the development of specific strategies to establish communication and provide meaningful input to proposed state School-to-Work Opportunities systems plans and implementation activities. These special grants programs are briefly described below.

State Development Grants

These grants will enable states to develop comprehensive statewide School-to-Work Opportunities plans. Possible state development activities include:

- Identifying or establishing broad-based partnerships among employers, labor, education, government, and community organizations to participate in the design, development, and administration of School-to-Work Opportunities programs.
- Supporting local School-to-Work Opportunities planning and development activities.
- Conducting labor market analysis and strategic planning for targeting local industry sectors or broad occupational clusters that can provide students work-based learning opportunities in high skill workplaces.
- Working with localities to develop strategies to recruit and retain all students in programs under this Act through collaborations with community-based organizations.
- Analyzing the post-high school employment experiences of recent high school graduates and school dropouts.

All states have received development grants of between $200,000 and $750,000 for a nine-month period. These grants may be extended and funds added, if the state does not receive an implementation grant and if it continues to make significant progress.

State Implementation Grants

These grants will be competitively awarded to states that can demonstrate substantial ability to begin full-scale implementation of the statewide plan. The activities states may undertake with these grants include, but are not limited to the following:

- Recruiting and providing assistance to employers to provide work-based learning experiences for all students.
- Working with localities to develop, recruit, and retain students in School-to-Work Opportunities programs, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- Designing or adapting school curricula that can be used to integrate academic, vocational, and occupational learning.
- Establishing comprehensive programs of school-based and work-based learning experiences for high school students and school dropouts.
- Enhancing linkages between secondary and postsecondary education.
- Providing training for teachers, employers, workplace mentors, counselors, and others.

A major portion of the funds received by states under the implementation grants program must be targeted to the development of School-to-Work Opportunities programs through local partnerships. State grantees must award at least 65% of the funds provided to local partnerships during the first year of the grant, 75% during the second year, and 85% during years 3-5. In the first year, 8 states will receive implementation grants. In each of the three subsequent years, other states will be selected for funding. At the end of four years, all states will have received implementation grants.

■ Grants to Local Partnerships (Title III)

In addition to the state development and implementation grants, the Act provides additional federal funds in the form of grants to "local partnerships" that have built a sound planning and development base for School-to-Work Opportunities programs, and are ready to begin implementing a local School-to-Work Opportunities program.

Local Partnerships:

The statute defines *local partnership* as:

Section 4(11) ... a local entity that is responsible for local school-to-work opportunities programs and that —
(A) consists of employers, representatives of local educational agencies and local postsecondary educational institutions (including representatives of area

vocational education schools, where applicable), local educators (such as teachers, counselors, or administrators), representatives of labor organizations or managerial employee representatives, and students; and

(B) may include other entities, such as —

(i) employer organizations;
(ii) community-based organizations;
(iii) national trade associations working at the local levels;
(iv) industrial extension centers;
(v) rehabilitation agencies and organizations;
(vi) registered apprenticeship agencies;
(vii) local vocational education entities;
(viii) proprietary institutions of higher education ...;
(ix) local government agencies;
(x) parent organizations;
(xi) teacher organizations;
(xii) vocational student organizations;
(xiii) Private Industry Councils ...;
(xiv) federally recognized Indian tribes, Indian organizations, and Alaska native villages ...; and
(xv) native Hawaiian entities.

Local partnerships shall include broad representation from individuals and groups at the community level, including individuals, groups, and organizations serving students with disabilities and families. As local partnerships are formed, it will be important to seek out opportunities to include representatives from local rehabilitation agencies and organizations, special education, vocational education, parent organizations, and other entities. You can contact your state education agency for further information concerning current plans, timelines, and lists of key individuals who will assume responsibility for establishing partnerships in your locality.

Implementation grants to local partnerships emphasize establishing programs in high-poverty areas of urban and rural communities to provide support for a comprehensive range of education, training, and support services for youths residing in such areas. The duration of such grants cannot exceed five fiscal years, and the grants are subject to annual approval and to availability of federal appropriations.

■ Strategies for Ensuring the Participation of Youth with Disabilities in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act

Several state systems change projects for youth with disabilities, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, have collaborated with their State School-to-Work Opportunities planning teams to enhance the participation of youth with disabilities in the various programs and services of the Act. Described here are several strategies and recommendations that professionals, parents, and advocates may find useful in advocating the participation of youth with disabilities in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. These strategies include:

- The statutory language encourages broad-based participation among employers, secondary schools, and postsecondary educational institutions (or related agencies), business associations, labor organizations, industrial extension centers, teachers, related services personnel, students, parents, community-based organizations, rehabilitation agencies and organizations, registered apprenticeship agencies, local vocational educational agencies, vocational student organizations, state or regional cooperative education associations, and human service agencies. Each state has now received a development grant and established a state-level School-to-Work Opportunities team. State and local agencies and organizations should review the membership makeup of these teams to ensure that individuals with disabilities, or those who represent the transition needs of youth with disabilities, are included as members of state development and implementation teams.
- Publicize and inform state and local officials on the transition service requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 and their direct and consistent relationship with the activities planned under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act.
- Engage in informational outreach activities with other groups and organizations in your state involved in serving youths with disabilities. These include: state and local parent groups and organizations, rehabilitation programs, special education units, and organizations of people with disabilities (i.e., ARCs and others).
- When establishing priorities for the funding of local school-to-work implementation grants, include language that ensures the full participation of all students, including students with disabilities, in the programs and services addressed in Sections 101-104 of the Act.
- Volunteer your time and services to assist state and local planning and implementation teams in the preparation and review of federal development and implementation grant applications concerning the involvement and participation of youths with disabilities in the various programs and services of the Act.
- Distribute information (i.e., best practices, "success" stories, etc.) at key state policy levels concerning meaningful ways in which youths with disabilities can readily participate in and benefit from the school-based and work-based learning components of the Act.

■ Conclusion

Since 1983, the school-to-work transition of youths with disabilities has been a major policy initiative and a high priority within the U.S. Department of Education, OSERS, and state education agencies across the nation. For over a decade now, the federal government, in cooperation with state and local programs, has stimulated the development of transition programs and services through the funding of research, demonstration, and training projects. Through these activities, we have come a long way in ensuring that individuals with disabilities throughout the nation achieve meaningful and productive lives following their high school experience. The lessons learned and the innovations developed over the past decade must be brought to the attention of state School-to-Work Opportunities planning teams. We encourage state and local special education units, vocational rehabilitation agencies, other human service agencies, and parent and consumer groups to actively engage in discussions regarding the interrelationship of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act to the transition service provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 101-476).

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